

U.S. NAVAL HOSPITAL, CORONA, CALIFORNIA.

In the summer and fall of 1941, the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery had under consideration the acquisition of certain hotel properties for use as hospitals. On 7 October 1941, Mr. Leo Stack, representing the Bureau, and Rear Admiral D.C. Cather, MC, U.S.N., Inspector Medical Department Activities, Pacific Coast, inspected the Norconian Hotel, Norco, California, accompanied by the owner, Mr. Rex B. Clark and his attorney, Mr. Loyal C. Kelly of Riverside, California.

Admiral Cather's report to the Surgeon General described the hotel as consisting of two wings, three and a half stories high, of reinforced concrete construction with concrete hollow brick filler and stucco outside. The hotel contained 125 bedrooms, each with bathroom, tub and shower. The bedrooms varied in size from single rooms to those large enough to hold four beds.

Extensive hydrotherapy installations made use of hot and cold sulphur water from local wells, and two large outdoor swimming pools and a small lake afforded additional facilities for therapy and recreation. The hotel property also included a golf course and several service buildings.

The Norconian Hotel property, consisting of 694.555 acres, located about 4 miles from the town of Corona (population 8,765), 125 miles from San Diego, and about 35 miles from Los Angeles and Long Beach, at a height of 700 feet above sea-level, overlooking the Santa Ana River valley, with its concrete buildings was considered by Admiral Cather to be an ideal installation for use as a naval hospital. Following further inspections of the property, the Secretary of the Navy authorized its purchase and on 15 December 1941, the Navy took possession of the property.

On 6 January 1942, the Secretary of the Navy designated the former Norconian Hotel as the U.S. Naval Hospital, Norco, California, effective as of 16 December 1941. Captain H.L. Jensen, MC, U.S.N., was the first Medical

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Officer in Command.

Mr. Claud Beelman of Los Angeles, architect of the Long Beach Naval Hospital, was retained as the architect for the conversion of the Norconian Hotel to a hospital. The Commandant, Eleventh Naval District appointed a board to survey the hotel buildings for the purpose of planning the changes required to adapt the hotel to a hospital, and the sum of \$350,000 was allotted for the project. Work began in February 1942 and was completed in October 1942. This conversion of the hotel building raised its bed capacity to 268 and provided surgical operating facilities, administrative offices and other clinical facilities.

On 4 February 1942, the Secretary of the Navy changed the name of the hospital to the U.S. Naval Hospital, Corona, California.

Staffing and organizing the hospital took several weeks and on 18 February 1942, the hospital had two patients, one officer and one enlisted man. On February 20th, twenty-four patients arrived by transfer from the Naval Hospital, Mare Island, following which the inflow of patients gradually increased until a peak census of 3,664 was reached.

Expansion of the hospital to 1,000 beds was authorized by the Secretary of the Navy on 7 April 1943, the sum of \$1,500,000 being allotted from the 1943 Naval Appropriation Act funds. The principal structures of this expansion consisted of three 5-story concrete ward buildings connected with the original hotel building, Nurses' Quarters and Hospital Corpsmen's Quarters of stucco, a 500,000 gallon concrete water tank and improvements to the sewer system.

The firm of Atkinson and Pollock, of Sacramento, California, were the contractors. Work began in May 1943 and the first of the new ward buildings was opened with appropriate ceremonies on 15 April 1943. This expansion was finished in June 1943 and the group of buildings became known as Unit I.

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It had a capacity of 1,261 beds.

Unit II, the Tuberculosis Hospital, was built in the southeastern portion of the reservation, in two increments. The first 250-beds were started in September 1942 and completed in July 1943 and the remainder of the 500 beds were started in June 1944 and completed in February 1945. The buildings of Unit II are of wood and stucco construction and are all one-story structures.

The fifteen buildings housing patients are arranged on either side of a long corridor on a gently sloping hillside with an administration building subsistence building and other accessory buildings centrally located. This unit is self-contained and the Navy's most modern facility for the treatment of tuberculosis.

Unit III, located in the northwestern corner of the reservation, consists of over 40 one-story temporary wooden buildings of the "Modulek" type of construction. There are 32 pavilion type ward buildings arranged on either side of a long corridor connecting with a centrally located subsistence building. This unit, with its own administration building and accessory service buildings was used as the Rheumatic Fever Hospital during the war, but is now closed. It has a capacity of 1,000 beds. Construction of Unit III was started in May 1943 and was completed in December 1943 although the unit was opened for patients on 16 November 1943.

The Army's Spadra General Hospital, located about 22 miles northwest of the Corona Naval Hospital, was taken over by Captain Jensen on 14 June 1944. This hospital consisted of the buildings of the former state narcotic hospital plus 34 ward buildings of very flimsy temporary construction. Spadra Annex had a bed capacity of 883. It was used as a convalescent hospital until its disestablishment on 30 June 1946.

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The reservation of the Corona Naval Hospital contains living accommodations for 7 married officers, 34 bachelor officers, 110 nurses, 405 enlisted men, 5 Marine Guards and 8 civilian employees.

The bed capacity of the Corona Naval Hospital is 2,246 on 8-foot centers with 1,206 in permanent construction. The estimated emergency bed capacity is 3,533. Hospital beds are assigned to specific services as follows: Contagious - 20; EENT - 20; Medical - 415; Surgical - 273; Tuberculosis - 557, and Urological - 35.

Taking the date of 31 October 1947 as a reference point for data on patients and hospital staff personnel, there were 530 patients of the following categories: 257 Navy and Marine Corps, 217 veterans, and 56 retired persons. Of these patients, 200 were being treated for tuberculosis. The hospital was staffed by 27 doctors, 47 nurses, 10 officers of the Medical Service Corps, 203 enlisted men and 311 civilian employees.

The plant account of the hospital lists the following values and costs: Land - \$1,295,354; Buildings and Improvements - \$9,050,130; Equipment - \$1,503,942 and Material Inventory - \$192,405. The annual maintenance and operating cost of the hospital is listed at \$2,070,941.00.